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PETER DAVID
ROBIN FURTH
JAE LEE
RICHARD ISANOVE

STEPHEN DARK KING TOWER



BATTLE OF JERICHO HILL

STEPHEN THE DARK KING TOWER

CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
STEPHEN KING

PLOTTING AND CONSULTATION
ROBIN FURTH

SCRIPT
PETER DAVID

ART
**JAE LEE &
RICHARD ISANOVE**

LETTERING
VC'S CHRIS
ELIOPOULOS

PRODUCTION
**ANTHONY DIAL
& IRENE Y. LEE**

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COVER
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PUBLISHER
DAN BUCKLEY

SPECIAL THANKS TO CHUCK VERRILL, MARSHA DEFIILIPPO, RALPH VICINANZA, BARBARA ANN MCINTYRE, BRIAN STARK,
JIM NAUSEDAS, JIM MCCANN, ARUNE SINGH, JEFF SUTER, JOHN BARBER, AND LAUREN SANKOVITCH

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IN A WORLD THAT HAS MOVED ON...

The Good Man John Farson and his General Grissom are restoring deadly ancient weaponry to be used against the Affiliation.

Roland Deschain and his ka-tet explode several stockpiles of weapons and Roland's belief is that word of the carnage will spread and demoralize Farson's forces and give hope to those in the Affiliation.

Back at the Affiliation camp, young Sheemie is delivered into the hands of Farson's right-hand man, Walter O'Dim. Using Maerlyn's Grapefruit, Sheemie desperately tries to warn Roland that member Randolph is a traitor, but Roland doesn't receive the message.

Due to Randolph's treachery, Roland and Cuthbert accidentally shoot and kill their ka-tet companion, Alain Johns. Later, when confronted by Cuthbert, the shamed Randolph chooses suicide. And then, the horn of Eld sounds, meaning the Jericho Hill encampment is under attack!

It's not supposed
to end this way.

Whatever else Roland
and his ka-tet knows,
that's one thing that
they ken for sure.

This business ain't supposed
to end, and end bloody, at the
base of some godsforsaken pile
of rock called Jericho Hill.

Because John Farrow is evil,
and they're good, and good
may have its setbacks and
bumps along the road, but
when the final bell gongs,
only good is left to hear
its peals.



*They know that.
They just...they
know it.*

*This ain't how
it's gonna end.*

*'Cept, deep
down...*

*...they know
it is.*



Because they're outnumbered.
Insanely outnumbered by thousands,
thousands of soldiers and mutants.

And looking on is Grissom,
wearing his famed cloak of
tattered souls...

...and Grissom's son, who
most like was born with a
gun in his hand and shot
his wetnurse...

...and overseeing it all, is
Walter O'Dim, or Marten
Broadcloak, or whatever
name you know him by...

...but we can all agree
that he is Death on the
Hoof.

And those hooves are
set to ride roughshod
over the Affiliation.







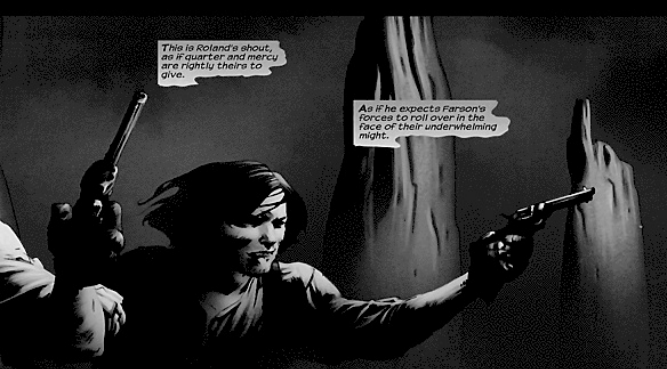
The day is stinking
hot, the stench of
death hanging in
the air...

No quarter!
And no mercy
for them!



Walter smiles in amusement
at the notion, which looks
more like a rictus than the
grin of a living man.

Certainly his
refusal to grant
us mercy is worth
a chuckle, is it
not, Grissom?



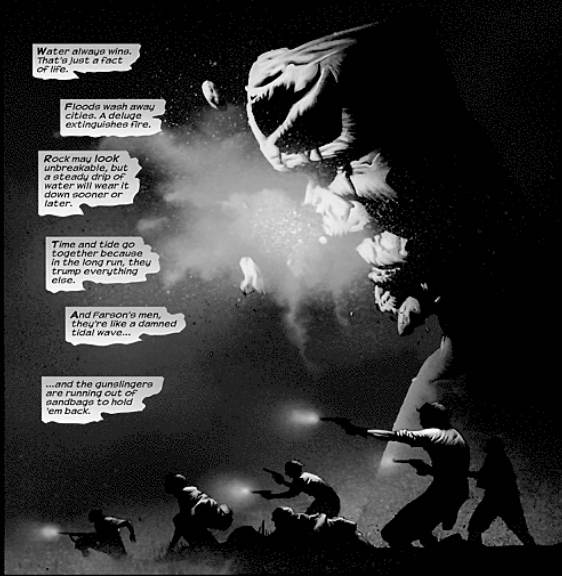
*This is Roland's shout,
as if quarter and mercy
are rightly theirs to
give.*

*As if he expects Farson's
forces to roll over in the
face of their underwhelming
might.*



*I'll laugh
when I'm wearing
his skull on my
belt.*

*Take their
heads! Leave
the bodies for
the birds!*



Water always wins.
That's just a fact
of life.

Floods wash away
cities. A deluge
extinguishes fire.

Rock may look
unbreakable, but
a steady drip of
water will wear it
down sooner or
later.

Time and tide go
together because
in the long run, they
trump everything
else.

And Farson's men,
they're like a damned
tidal wave...

...and the gunslingers
are running out of
sandbags to hold
'em back.



Which ain't to
say they ain't
trying.

Not a single bullet
is wasted. Hundreds
go down before them.



But all it takes is one casualty from Roland's allies to equal one hundred deaths on the other side.

Aileen sees the spear go right through her but she don't feel it, 'cause her brain shuts down, shielding her from the agony.

Aileen!
NO!



Bert, I...
I can't feel
my arm.

How the hell
am I supposed
to shoot...

...if I
can't feel
my arm...

Pamn...I
hope...Roland
isn't...and...ry...
at...at me...



Bert hardly has
time to register
Aileen's death
rattle...

...when his shoulder
and leg feel like twin
hammer blows were
struck.

His brain don't do
him the kindness
that Aileen's did as
he feels like his
body's on fire.

"Not this day," he
croaks, and fights
to push the pain
away.



Seeing your
father's faces still,
gunslingers?

This'll give
you a prime
view of them
on the other
side!

Thomas Whitman and several
other gunslingers erupt in
flames.

They fall screaming to the
ground, trying to smother
it, but it's far too little
and late.

Roland is momentarily stunned
at the horror. That moment is
all it takes to make him a
perfect target...



...as Jamie DeCurry
instantly realizes.



Roland!

Get down,
for the love
of--!

Roland shouts angrily
at Jamie for distracting
him...

...and realizes
only belatedly that
the man he's cursing
out just saved his
life...



...at the cost
of his own.



Damnation!

I had Peschain
in my *sights*! And
that stupid bastard
ruined my shot!

Softly, my
son. You'll have
more opportunities
to dispatch Roland
Peschain...

...and prune
the final branch
from the House of Eld
Family tree. I assure
you of that.



Anyone...
know what time
it is...?

Why? Do you
have a previous
engagement?

Just...
wondering.
Hoping to make
it through the
day, that's
all...

High
noon, I'd
guess...

Everyone,
be quiet...

"Everyone?"
There's maybe a
dozen of us left,
Roland.

I know. And
if this is to be
our final--



Do not dare
complete that
sentence, Roland.
Final? Screw that!
You do not grasp the
reality of our
situation.

Mayhap. I
don't even grasp
how you're standing,
Cuthbert.

Tall, Roland.
I'm standing tall.
Roland...



We've been
betrayed by one
of our own. We're
outnumbered. Our
backs are to
the sea.

We've got
'em right where
we want 'em!

Shall we
charge?



Aye.
Give me the
horn.



Hah! Nay, for
I blow it sweeter
than you ever
did.

You can have it
again when I am dead.
Neglect not to pluck
it up, Roland, for it's
your property.

*Roland smiles wanly and
nods, acquiescing to what
he suspects is his friend's
last request.*



Ye of the
castle, to me!
Gunslingers,
to me!

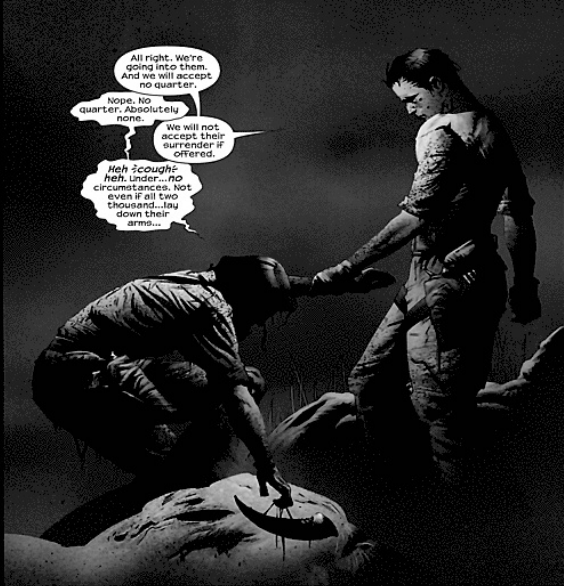
To me,
I say!

As for
gunslingers,
Roland, I am
here...

...and we
are the
last...

*Bert's body betrays
him, then, in a way that
his fighting spirit never
would.*

*On the edge of
death, he stumbles,
and Roland catches
him.*



All right. We're
going into them.
And we will accept
no quarter.

Nope. No
quarter. Absolutely
none.

We will not
accept their
surrender if
offered.

*Heh. Scough-
heh. Under...no
circumstances. Not
even if all two
thousand...lay
down their
arms...*

Then blow
that damnable
horn.

*They are the last
words Roland will
speak to his friend
in this life.*

No, it ain't
supposed to
end like this.

That's what the cry of
the horn seems to say.
It carries high and loud
and pure across the
killing ground.

And Roland puts
into words the
defiance of the
horn's tone.



**HILE!
FORWARD!
FOR THE
TOWER!**

And the wave rolls forward, determined to extinguish the fire of the guns.



No! Not Cuthbert!



*It rolls over Roland's men,
taking them down one by one,
feeling no more pity or remorse
than would a wave of water.*



*'Tis not meet
that I have no
blood on my hands
this glorious
day.*

*This will
attend to
that.*

He must have known this moment would come. Even the most addled of mutants knew it, so sure as hell, Roland did, too.

And yet it still shocks him. Hits him like a boulder to the face.



And Roland goes berserk.

Gone are all the rules about how to shoot ever taught him by men.

He fires wild, he fires blind, and he still seems to take out ten enemies with every single bullet.

Guthbert's advice to him is forgotten, as is the Horn of Eld, left lying on the ground, covered with blood and dirt.



He never feels the bullets that hit him. In his mind's eye, he's likely still up, still shooting...





*And the barbarian
chieftain standing
over him growls a
single word:*

Surrender.

*And Roland looks up
at him, his eyes red,
his throat constricted,
and he growls right
back...*



*I refuse
to accept...your
surrender...*

*He hears a
coarse laugh...*

*...and then
nothing.*

The newly fallen night
is as still as the day was
filled with violence...

My uncle's
wishes were
explicit in this
regard, General.
No mutilation of
their bodies.





Not even
their heads?
Truly?

Believe it or
not, General, I am
not surprised. As much
disdain as the Good
Man Feels For
humanity...

...I believe he
has some modicum of
respect for one who
managed to thwart him
for so long. 'Twas a
worthy feat, and worth
some small
tribute.

I, on the
other hand, can
offer my own small
tribute as well.



*His warm spit splatters
on Roland's cheek, and
then he mutters...*

I won. You
will never
reach the
Tower.

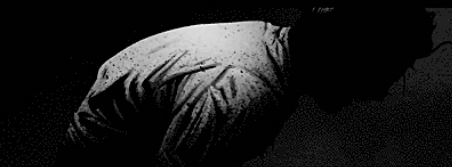


I couldn't tell you how long nothing moves after the army has left the killing field.

An hour? A lifetime? Who knows?

All I do know is that slowly, aching, eventually...

Roland starts to move.



Who can say how it's possible? Not me, that's for sure.

Maybe it's just a spirit that's too stubborn to flee a body aching beyond ken.

Maybe the gods have reached down and touched him.

Or maybe some demon has crawled up from perdition, climbed into Roland's body and is wearing it like he would a set of clothing.



That would explain why Roland looks more like an avenging spirit than a man just then.

It's not supposed to end like this.
I will not...let it end.



I will have
revenge...on the
enemies of
Gilead...

I will find the
Park Tower...find
that great edifice
in its field of
roses...

...and when I find it
and climb to the top,
I will demand justice
from whoever, or
whatever, resides
there.

And he,
or she, or it,
will give me that
justice...

...and I will
embrace my
friends once
more...

...and
Gilead will live
again.



AND IT DOESN'T END.

MY MOST MEMORABLE DARK TOWER MOMENTS...



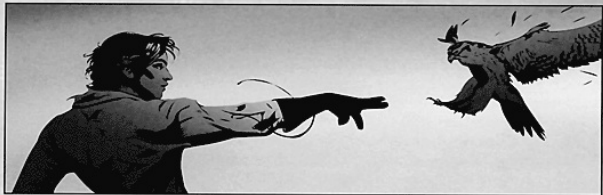
When we began working on this final installment of *The Battle of Jericho Hill* and we realized that the first leg of Roland's long journey was drawing to a close, Mike Horwitz asked if I could write a short piece about my favorite Dark Tower moments. Could I choose between five and ten scenes that really stood out for me? If I wanted to, I could focus on a particular page, or even a single line. I thought it was a great idea and so went back through all my comics and decided . . .

That I couldn't choose! Paging through these Dark Tower volumes was like looking through an album of a secret part of my life. That may sound odd, but to tell you the truth there are times when I remember Roland's experiences better than I remember my own. I might have no recollection at all of what I did last Thursday, but I can tell you in great detail (and in beautiful Technicolor) how Roland and

his tet defeated the crazy cult of Amoco, or how Walter coerced Randolph into selling out his companions, or how once upon a time Roland's mind was transported into Maerlyn's Grapefruit. . .

Since picking favorite scenes was too difficult (my fellow Constant Readers, I'd have to keep you reading for a week!) I thought I could at least share some memorable Dark Tower moments. Here are some scenes, images, lines, and experiences that have permanently etched themselves upon my mind and spirit.

1. When I received an email from agent Chuck Verrill, telling me that Steve King and Marvel had agreed to tell the story of Roland's lost youth... and that I was going to be involved. Knowing that I would be able to spend the next five years with Roland and his young tet was literally a dream come true. Cuthbert, Alain, Susan, and Sheemie have always had a special place in my heart and I felt that their story really needed to be expanded. Knowing that my old friends would come to life in full color was wonderful. For years, I'd secretly prayed that this would happen. There was a whole new audience out there waiting for Roland, I just knew it.



2. I will always remember the first time I laid eyes on the opening pages of *The Gunslinger*. I was amazed by their skill and their beauty. Jae's panel by panel and page by page pacing, Richard's subtle but profound use of color, Peter's wonderfully skilled dialogue, all came together seamlessly and perfectly. New readers would be plunged right into the heart of Mid-World, both past and present. And what is so amazing is that in just a few pages the story made a seamless transition from Roland, the grown man, chasing the Man in Black over the desert, to Roland, the young boy, standing in Gilead's Square Yard waiting to prove his skill to his teacher Cort.

The combination of powerful image and intense captions and dialogue made me realize just how much a story is transformed when it moves from word alone to word and image. In this medium, every nuance of color tells a tale, and every word is carefully chosen.

3. Meeting Stephen King in London (he'd come over to promote *Lisey's Story*) and showing him the *Dark Tower* artwork I'd been sent. Although we sat on a bench in the corner of a room full of celebrating people, our minds were in Mid-World. Steve told me that seeing Jae and Richard's art was like having the characters step from his mind onto the page. I felt the same way. It was a truly magical discussion. We spoke for quite a while about Susan Delgado, whose story still breaks my heart. Jae and Richard had captured both her beauty and her sweetness.

4. The scene where Roland faces Cort in the Square Yard. Fabulously drawn, fabulously colored, fabulously paced both in terms of image and scripting. I especially love the page where Cort and Roland have their ritual interchange. There are twelve long thin panels on that page, but my God, there's no other way to do it. We switch from close-ups of

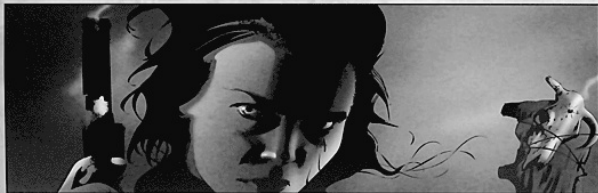
Roland's eyes and the eyes of his hawk, to close-ups of Cort's face. But while the camera remains steady on Roland and the hawk, each time we see Cort the camera comes closer to him. And Cort's eyes are so expressive—they tell a story in and of themselves! The final narrow panel—in which the camera pulls back so that we can see Roland loosening his hawk's tether and Cort readying himself for the bird's onslaught—is in such dark shades that it is almost a silhouette. Beautiful. The first panel on the following page, where Cort is charging directly at us, is pure Cort!

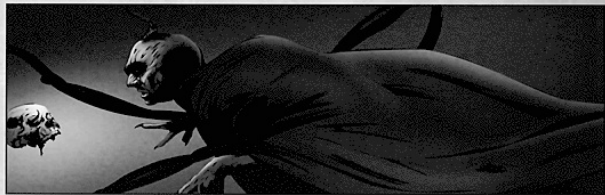
5. The email exchanges we had as a group at the end of *The Gunslinger*. We needed to either introduce an image of Susan's aunt Cordelia (who hadn't appeared in our story yet), or show the witch Rhea draining blood from a different victim. Jae suggested that we could have Rhea drink blood from a horse if we couldn't insert a new character so late in the game,

but this led to a whole string of absolutely hilarious emails entitled "horse sucking." (I think it was Peter who came up with the phrase!) We're lucky that the internet police didn't seize the emails. None were especially rude (oh, that dirty mind of yours!) but they were really funny.

6. The first time I saw Aileen. I think the email came from Jae, but Richard had already colored it. As I've written before, Aileen is very close to my heart, since I put a lot of myself into her creation. As soon as I clicked on the image, my breath was taken away. There she was, on the page, EXACTLY as I'd imagined her!

7. Peter's scripting for the end of *TREACHERY*, Chapter Two, where Aileen—who has been rejected by the young male gunslingers—wipes away her tears and shoots at the animal skull that the boys had set up for target practice. In Peter's script, he





tells us that Aileen stands further from the target than did the boys who rejected her company, but that she knows she has the skill to outshoot any of the official (male) gunslinger apprentices. He captures her mindset and her inner turmoil perfectly. Finally, when she recites the Gunslinger Litany, she changes it in one small but extremely significant way: "She who kills with her gun has forgotten the face of her mother." In male-dominated Mid-World, this was an important stand. For all the girl gunslingers out there, Peter, I thank you. I didn't have the courage to write that into the original story, but you had the courage to put it into the script.

8. The transformation of Maerlyn's Grapefruit into a tentacle eye at the beginning of Long Road Home. When I initially envisioned that transformation, I had no idea how it would transfer onto the page, but WOW!

9. Seeing the full page spread of the Crimson King in Chapter V of

The Long Road Home. FANTASTIC pencils by Jae, FANTASTIC color by Richard, FANTASTIC dialogue by Peter. We really had to expand upon the Crimson King in our version of the story, and I LOVE this page. The monologue that Peter wrote for the Crimson King is prophetic and powerful, as befits such a dangerous monster.

10. The Death of Robert Allgood in The Fall of Gilead. While Richard was drawing this, he really wanted to increase the dramatic tension and so had Robert leap in front of the poisoned dart meant for Steven Deschain. But though Robert is shot, he doesn't stop protecting his dinh. In fact, we don't even know that he has been hit in the heart until the danger is over. That penultimate panel, when Robert opens his shirt and we see the dart embedded in his flesh and the little red lines of poison already making their way across his chest, is incredible. And Peter's clipped dialogue: "Oh . . . damnation" is perfect. The whole scene captures both the heroism of



the individual character and the selfless sacrifice of a well-trained gunslinger.

11. The double page spread of the Amoco cult in *The Battle of Jericho Hill 3*. This is a real triumph of design and gets across the madness of the cult with tremendous power. The scripting is WONDERFUL. I especially love the part where Aileen keeps telling her fellow gunslingers that she made the shot that cut down the cage, but none of them believe her. In the end, her balloon contains a scribble, she's so angry. Hilarious and perfect!

When I began this journey into Mid-World with Marvel back in 2005, I had no way of knowing how life-changing it would be. Over the last five years I have learned so much about comics and page design and storytelling and scripting that at times I thought my brain would burst from such rapid expansion.

To Jae Lee, Richard Isanove, Peter David, Dennis Calero, Ralph Macchio, Mike Horwitz, Nicole Boose, Lauren Sankovitch, and John Barber, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks. I have learned so much from all of you. I never dreamed that I could be part of such a wonderful and creative ka-tet, or that collaboration could be such a powerful experience. Thanks also to the wonderful and magnanimous Stephen King. Without you, there wouldn't be a *Dark Tower*! And finally, to our fellow Constant Readers, thanks so much for riding with us.

Thankee-sais.

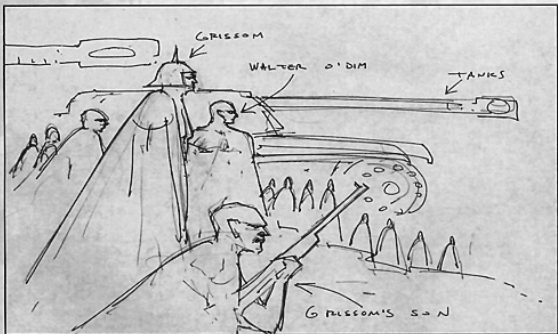
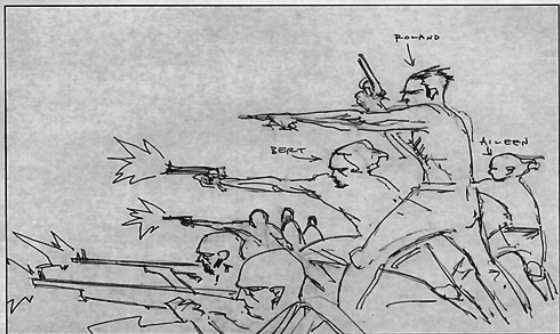
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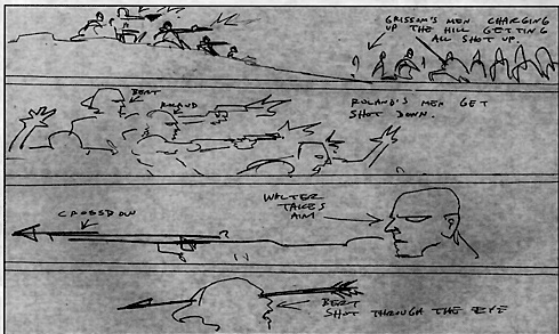
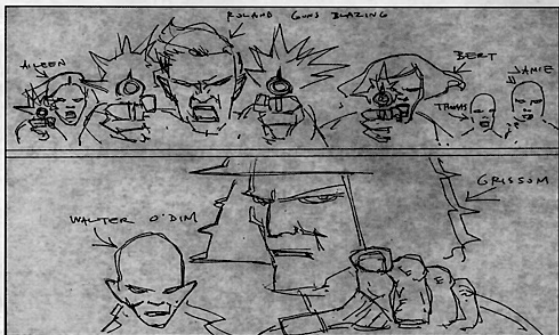
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SKETCHBOOK

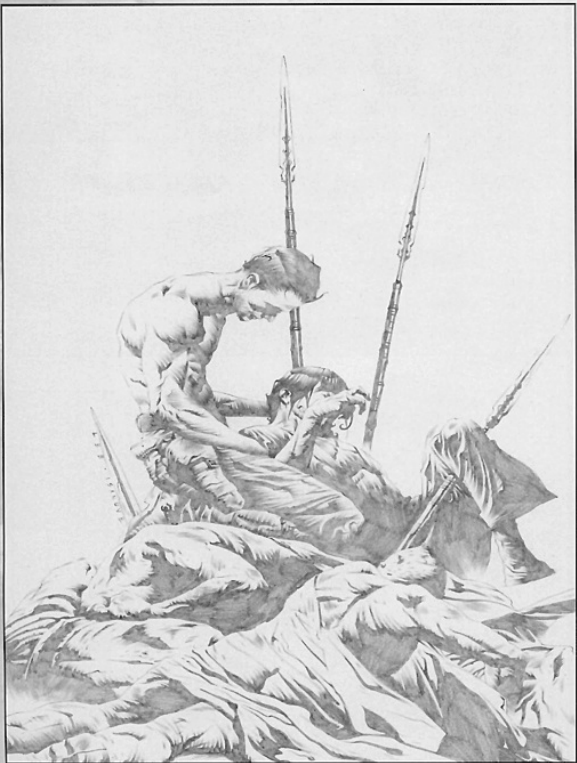
A look at the creative team's in-progress work,
including layouts, pencil art and cover concepts.

JAE LEE'S ORIGINAL PAGE LAYOUTS FOR THIS ISSUE'S OPENING SPREAD. THE FINAL VERSIONS OF THESE PAGES CAN BE SEEN EARLIER IN THIS ISSUE WITH PAINTS BY RICHARD ISANOVE.





JAE LEE'S ORIGINAL PENCILS FOR THIS ISSUE'S COVER.



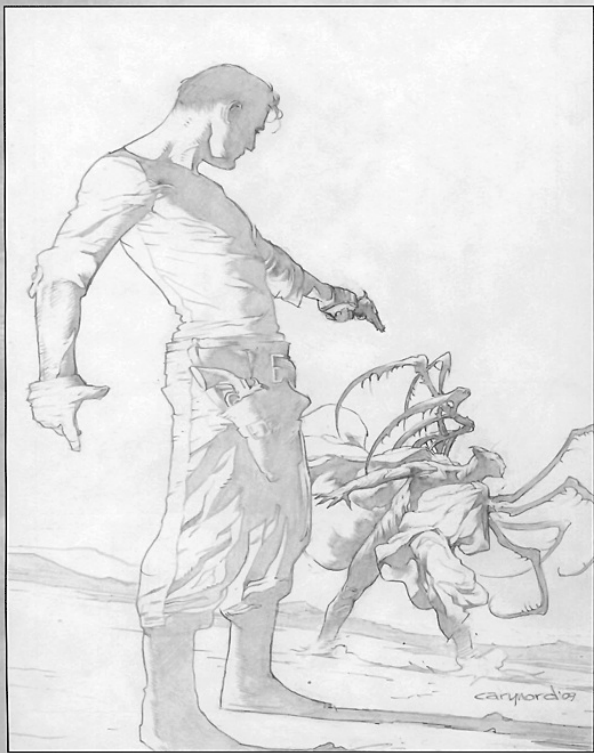
JAE LEE'S FINAL PENCIL ART.







SUPERSTAR ARTIST CARY NORD (THOR; SECRET INVASION: X-MEN) DELIVERS THE FINAL ARTIST VARIANT IN THE DARK TOWER'S EPIC RUN. THE FINAL PAINTS WERE PROVIDED BY HIS THOR COLLABORATOR CHRISTINA STRAIN.



DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER— THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The first chapter of adult Roland Deschain's adventures begins in **DARK TOWER: THE GUNSLINGER**. Here's an exclusive preview of new series artist Sean Phillips' (**CRIMINAL, INCOGNITO**) bold new vision of Mid-World.







NEXT: Roland's epic search for the Dark Tower continues this May in THE GUNSLINGER!





All is not well in Mid-World. Gunslinger Roland Deschain, the young man whose destiny it is to seek and save the Dark Tower, is haunted by horrifying visions from the evil seeing sphere, Maerlyn's Grapefruit. The Crimson King, enemy of all that lives, has long plotted the utter destruction of the Tower, and the undoing of reality itself. Now, with Roland unable to act, his monstrous foe has put his plan into motion...

From the creative team that brought Roland's early adventures to life in *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger Born*, *The Dark Tower: The Long Road Home*, *The Dark Tower: Treachery* and *The Dark Tower: The Fall of Gilead* comes the next chapter of this dark saga of friendship, betrayal and a cosmic quest as conceived by master storyteller Stephen King.

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